

Commencement Address  
The Citadel  
by Admiral Stansfield Turner  
Charleston, South Carolina  
17 May 1980

America's Changing Role

Members of the graduating class of 1980, your president, Admiral Stockdale, and I were born within a few days of each other. We were raised within a few miles of each other. We were raised in the Middle West of the United States in the 1930's, a period when isolationism was particularly strong in that area. As we prepared to go to college, neither of us ever thought that a large part of our lives would be spent in support of the foreign policy of this country. I suspect neither of us ever thought that we would travel as far away as Europe. Yet, by the time we reached our graduation in 1946 -- just as you have today -- isolationism was virtually extinct. It went out in the great crucible of World War II.

By the end of that war, a profound change had taken place in this country, a country that just two and one-half decades before had rejected membership in the predecessor to the United Nations, the League of Nations. In contrast, in the immediate post-World War II years, under the great leadership of President Truman, this country evolved the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and the UN Resolution on Korea. In those years we firmly committed this country to help our friends and allies defend themselves against aggression. Suddenly our nation's interests were worldwide and the mantle of free world leadership was America's. That changed the lives of Admiral Stockdale and myself markedly.

As you graduate today, the United States faces changes in its relationship to the rest of the world that are just as profound and, I would suggest, they may affect your future markedly, also. The world environment in which the United States must operate in the 1980's will be as different from the world of the 1960's and 70's as was the world of the 1940's that Admiral Stockdale and I knew to the world in which we were raised in the 1930's.

A big difference for you, however, is that it is very likely that this country will have to adapt to that change without some cataclysmic event like a world war to alert us. You will have to define the new role of United States Leadership in a world where conditions are evolutionary and subtle--circumstance which you may not detect if you are not alert.

Take, for instance, the traditional role of the United States as leader of the Western Alliance. For thirty-five years, we have clearly been the dominant force within the Alliance. Can we, however, expect to remain dominant in the 1980's? Will we still be the largest and by far the most powerful member of that team? You would do well to expect surprises from our allies.

The Europeans and the Japanese are prosperous economically. They are stable politically. They feel independent and deserve to. They still acknowledge, of course, that their security is inexorably tied to their relationship with us, but the scramble today for oil and other natural resources has become so vital to them that they must have their own say in how the Western World copes with these problems. The Alliance is not doomed to weaken, but it is bound to function with far more regard for the independent voices of its members. There will be a different Alliance in the decades ahead.

If our ties with our allies alter, so too will our relations with our principal adversary, the Soviet Union. I believe you will have to adjust to a different Soviet Union in the 1980's. From Stalin, through Khrushchev, to Brezhnev, Soviet leadership has been cautious and conservative in avoiding possible military confrontations with the United States. In the 1980's, however, we will confront the first Soviet leadership that does not feel inferior to the United States militarily.

Last December in Afghanistan the Soviet leaders committed their military forces to combat outside the Soviet Bloc for the first time since World War II. Does this indicate a new aggressiveness, a new willingness to take risks? It seems to me that it does indicate at least that they are likely to continue to take advantage of opportunities when they occur.

What about the deteriorating economic fortunes of the Soviet Union? Will the Soviet leaders of the 1980's feel pressure to undertake military adventures to cover up their economic deficiencies at home? For example, will they use their military in efforts to augment their diminishing oil production, or will their economic weakness keep them at home tending the store?

Much depends, of course, on who those Soviet leaders of the 1980's will be. Surely the aged men who govern the Soviet Union today will be gone. We can only predict that whoever succeeds them is unlikely to be as cautious or as predictable in dealing with the United States. You had better be prepared for more surprises from Moscow in the future than in the past.

One additional element of change that you are bound to encounter in the 1980's will be the scramble for natural resources. The most obvious example is oil. But how about the other imports which we take for granted? We import all of our rubber; all of our coffee, chromium, cobalt, tin, and most of our manganese and nickel. In all of these and other cases, nations that used to be pliant to our needs for such resources are independently determining what it is best for them to produce, not what is best for us. They will produce only that which generates the amount of revenue which they need, or which lets them conserve their resources in accordance with their own dictates.

When you couple more restrictive production policies with an increasing world population and the rising expectations of that population for a better standard of living, you can see that a great tranference of power to nations that have never exercised it before is taking place.

In the decades of the 80's and the 90's, you will have to understand those nations, their national aspirations, and the character of their people. You will have to negotiate with them far differently than we have even in the recent past.

It is my deepest hope that you will not have a World War to startle you into appreciating how different the role of the United States will be in the world of the 1980's than it was in the 1970's. Admiral Stockdale and I did not have to be as perceptive as you will have to be. We had a world war which jolted this country into a new awareness of its changed role in the world. If you are to make sound decisions in the 1980's and the 1990's, you must care about the world around us and you must pay attention to it. That applies whether you enter the military, or other government service, or whether you pursue a civilian life. You must understand how our national interests as well as those of our allies and potential enemies relate -- where those interests harmonize and where they conflict. And, understanding that, you must help to define our nation's role in the world.

This is not an easy challenge, especially since the pressures on you for conformity of outlook will be greater than perhaps any time in this century. Do not forget that George Orwell's decade is here. The class that replaces you in The Citadel next fall will be the Class of 1984. George Orwell's "doublethink" is already with us in some measure. Today you, as individuals, must stand up to the omnipresent, supremely superficial, instant analyses of our times by the television networks and the written media. Only you can determine if "Big Brother" will direct your thinking. Only you can determine whether your understanding of our nation's role in the world will be dictated by the tube or molded by your own independent thinking.

That is really why you have been here at The Citadel -- to develop your creative abilities and to learn to think independently --not to learn the skills of any particular profession, military or civilian.

I challenge you to reason soundly and deeply about the world of the 1980's, and our nation's role in it because that role will continue to be critical to all free men. We can retain the mantle of world leadership or we can lose it. The reins of United States leadership will be in your hands much sooner than you think.

I congratulate you on the achievement of this great step in your careers. I also challenge you, as your careers move onward, to ensure that, whether as a public servant or a private citizen, you each seek to repay the privilege of this fine education. You can repay it by contributing to our nation's understanding of itself and its responsibilities in the complex world which we will face in the decades of your leadership. Good luck and God bless you.

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In contrast, in the immediate post-World War II years, under the great leadership of President Truman, this country evolved the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and the UN Resolution on Korea. In those years we firmly committed this country to help our friends and allies defend themselves against aggression. Suddenly our nation's interests were worldwide--and the mantle of free world leadership was Americas. That changed the lives of Admiral Stockdale and myself markedly.

As you graduate today, the United States faces changes in its relationship to the rest of the world that are just as profound and I would suggest that they may affect your futures' markedly, also. I suggest to you that the world environment in which the United States must operate in the 1980's, will be as different from the world of the 1960's and 70's as was the world of the 1940's that Admiral Stockdale and I knew to the world in which we were raised in the 1930's.

A big difference for you, however, as it is very likely that this country will have to adapt to that change without some cataclysmic event like a world war to alert us. You will have to define the new role of U.S. leadership in the world in conditions which are evolutionary and subtle--circumstance which you may not detect if you are not alert.

Take, for instance, the traditional role of the United States as leader of the Western Alliance. For 35 years we have clearly been the dominant force within the Alliance. Can we, however, expect to be that dominant in the 1980's. Will we still be the largest and by far the most powerful member of that team? But you would do well to expect surprises from our allies. The Europeans and the Japanese are prosperous economically; they are stable politically; they feel independent and deserve to. They still acknowledge, of course that their security is inextricably tied to their relationship to us. But the scramble today for oil and other natural resources

has become so vital to them that they must have their own say in how the Western world copes with these problems. The great Alliance is not doomed to weaken; but it is bound to function with far more regard to the independent voices of its members. That will be a different Alliance in the decades ahead.

If our ties with our allies are going to alter, so too will our relations with our principal adversary, the Soviet Union. You, I believe, will have to adjust to a different Soviet Union in the 1980's. From Stalin, through Khrushchev, to Brezhnev, Soviet leadership has been cautious and conservative in avoiding possible military confrontations with the United States.

In the 1980's, however, we will confront the first Soviet leadership that does not feel inferior to the United States militarily. Last December in Afghanistan the Soviet leaders committed their military forces to combat outside the Soviet Block for the first time since World War II. Does this indicate a new aggressiveness, a new willingness to take risks? It seems to me that it does indicate at least that they are likely to continue to take advantageous of opportunities when they occur. But what about the deteriorating economic fortunes of the Soviet Union? Will the Soviet leaders of the 1980's feel under pressure to undertake military adventures in order to cover up their economic deficiencies at home? For instance, to augment their diminishing oil production? Or will their economic weakness keep them at home tending the store? Much depends, of

course, on who the Soviet leaders of the 1980's will be. Surely the aged men who govern the Soviet Union today will be gone. We can only predict that whoever succeeds them is unlikely to be as cautious or as predictable in dealing with the United States. You had better be prepared for more surprises from Moscow in the future than in the past.

One additional element of change that you are bound to encounter in the 1980's will be the scramble for natural resources. The most obvious example is oil. But how about the other imports which we take for granted? We import all of our rubber; all of our coffee; chromium, cobalt, tin, most of our manganese and nickel. In all of these and other cases, nations that used to be pliant to our needs for such resources are independently determining what it is best for them to produce, not what is best for us. They will produce only that which generates the amount of revenue which they need, or that which lets them conserve their resources in accordance with their own dictates.

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Press Conference

Q. Admiral, several weeks ago, several cadets, Iranian cadets left the Citadel at.....inaudible.

A. Our relationship with the government of Iran is so strained today because of the totally illegal, inhumane treatment that they are taking on our hostages over there. We believe the time has come that we should not continue this kind of relationship with students here in this country. It is unfortunate for them, but it is the product of their own government's actions.

Q. Representatives of the Ayatollah's government are saying that there are CIA agent's over there. Are there?

A. We never comment on our operational activities because if we deny something when it is not true, then we are in a tough position if it is true. We adhere to the policy of not talking whether falsely accused or properly attributed.

Q. Inaudible.

A. The Central Intelligence Agency, in my opinion, is the finest intelligence service in the world today, and we have provided and consistently do provide excellent intelligence advice to the President and his advisors. I am very proud of the Agency and what it does.

Q. Inaudible.

A. I think my answer to that has to be just what it was to my previous one. We just cannot comment on our operational activities without compromising them in the ways that would be injurious to the future of this country and I am sure you wouldn't want me to do that.

Q. How would the CIA regain the power it once had?

A. Well, I am not sure I agree with your question. That is, I don't believe we have to regain power that we once had. I believe the authorities available to the CIA today are adequate to do its job. The biggest problem we have is being able to retain our secrets. We cannot get individuals or foreign countries to cooperate with us if what we are going to do with them becomes known in the public domain. You can't keep your sources if they are compromised in the world of the media, we must keep our sources on our side. What we do need is some strengthening of the laws of this country to permit us to keep those secrets, that is what we are looking for.

Q: Inaudible.

A. International terrorism has declined, but I would be hesitant to predict that it is going to continue on that downward slope. What has happened, that is significant, is the law enforcement, the cooperation of intelligence agencies in predicting international terrorism has improved. So that some of the more complex forms are diminishing. But, bomb throwing, simple assassination rather than very complex operations still continue and unfortunately the American businessman, in particular overseas, is more a target than many others. So it is still a serious problem for our country and for the world.

Q. Inaudible.

A. Again you are asking me for operational information that I just can't affirm or deny.

Q. Inaudible.

A. Well, the distance between us and our allies and even close friends who aren't actually allies in terms of our power in the world is much narrower today than it was a decade or two ago, we were still predominant before. We are still a critical factor in the free world maintaining its freedom. We have to be more solicitous, more understanding, more cooperative with our allies recognizing their genuine interests and concerns than perhaps we did in the past. It does mean that you have to understand them more. It is more of a teamwork effort, you just can't dictate to people you have to know what their interests and their concerns are. It goes very much with our intentions throughout the world to be interested in the rights of other people.

Q. Inaudible.

A. That is a very good question and I suppose the most likely answer is a combination of a confession that we have an infinite amount of money or Americans are wealthy or their firms are wealthy and they can afford to pay ransom. I suppose the other is that if people want to apply political leverage like the hostages in Iran they feel they better do it with us than some small country which doesn't have much to offer them in return.

Q. You mentioned that with the Soviet leadership the old guard was dying out and the new one coming in. Do you see the trend of the cold war continuing in the next decade. Is the cold war going to get hotter.

A. That is the \$64,000 question. In my view, of course relations with us and the Soviet Union have cooled markedly in the wake of their blatant military intervention in Afghanistan. I believe that I see no signs of the Soviets withdrawing their military forces from Afghanistan and as long as they do not, the relationship in regard to detente, relaxation of tensions that existed before Afghanistan is not likely to return soon. I believe the country is firm in insisting that this kind of a blatant takeover of a free country cannot be tolerated.

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- Admiral S and I - born within few days of each other
  - raised within few miles of each other
  - raised in Midwest in the period of 1930's when isolationism particularly prevalent that area of our country.

As we prepared for college neither of us ever thought that a large part of our lives would be spent in support of the foreign affairs of our country. I doubt that either of us expected ever to travel as far away as Europe. Yet, by the time in 1946 that we reached the point of graduation--just where you are today--isolationism was gone. It disappeared in the crucible of a great world war.

By the end of that war a profound change had taken place in a country that two and one-half decades before had rejected membership in the predecessor to the United Nations--the League of Nations. In these post war years, under the great leadership of President Truman, we evolved the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and the UN Resolution that took us to war in Korea. In those years, we firmly committed this country to help defend our friends from aggression. Suddenly our nation's interests were worldwide--and the mantle of free world leadership was ours.

- As you graduate, US is facing changes in its relationship to rest of world that are just as profound, I believe. I suggest to you that the world environment in which the United States must operate in the 1980's will be as different from the world of the 60's and 70's as was that world of the 1940's from what Admiral S and I knew in the midwest in the 1930's.
- A big difference for you, however, is that you will very likely have to help our country adapt to this kind of change without some cataclysmic event like a world war to awaken our country. You will have to define a new role for U.S. leadership in conditions that are evolutionary and subtle--circumstances you may not detect if you are not alert.
- Take, for instance, our traditional role as leader of the Western Alliance. For 35 years we have clearly been the dominant force within the Alliance. Can we, however, expect to maintain that dominance into the 1980's? We will still be the largest and most powerful member of the team, but you would do well to be prepared for surprises from our allies. The Europeans and the Japanese are prosperous economically; they are stable politically; they deserve to feel independent and do. They still acknowledge that their security and ours are inexorably tied to our relationship with each other. Yet the scramble for oil and other resources is so vital to them that they must have their own say in how the Western

world copes with these problems. The Alliance is not doomed to weaken; but it is bound to function with far more regard to the independent voices of each member. That will indeed make for a different Alliance in the decades ahead.

- If our ties with allies are going to alter, so too will our relations with our key adversary, the Soviet Union. You, I believe, will have to adjust to a different Soviet Union in the 1980's. From Stalin through Khrushchev to Brezhnev, Soviet leadership has been cautious and conservative in avoiding possible military confrontations with the U.S.

In the 80's we will deal with the first Soviet leadership that does not feel inferior to us militarily.

Last December in Afghanistan the Soviet leaders committed their military forces to combat outside the Soviet Bloc for the first time since World War II.

Was that an indicator of a new aggressiveness, a new willingness to take risks?

It seems to be proof that they will continue to take advantage of opportunities which present themselves.

But what about their deteriorating economic fortunes?

Will the Soviet leaders of the 1980's feel under pressure to undertake military adventures in order to cover up their economic failures at home; for instance, to augment their diminishing oil production?

Or will their economic weakness keep them at home tending the store? Much depends on who the Soviet leaders of the 80's will be. Surely the aged men who govern the Soviet Union today will be gone. We can only be sure that whoever succeeds them is unlikely to be as cautious or as predictable in dealing with us. You had better be prepared for more surprises from Moscow in the next two decades than have we in the past two.

- One additional element of change that you are bound to encounter in the 1980's will be the scramble for natural resources. The most obvious example is oil. The last half of the decade 70's abruptly shattered our sense of independence here.

But, how many more imports do we take for granted?

We import all of our rubber

all of our coffee

all of our chromium

all of our cobalt

all of our tin

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nearly all of our nickel.

In all of these and other cases, nations that used to be pliant to our needs are independently determining what is best for them--not what is best for us. They will produce what permits them to generate the revenues they need, or what conserves their resources for the long run.

Also as these nations develop economically and their own needs for their raw materials increase, they are bound to make less available for export. When you couple such more restrictive production policies with the increasing world population and the rising expectations of that population for a better standard of living, you can see that a great transference of power to nations that have never before exercised it is taking place.

In the decades of the 80's and 90's, you will have to

- understand these nations, their national aspirations, the character of their people, and
- negotiate with them far differently than we have even a few years ago.

- It is my deepest hope that you will not have a WW to startle you into appreciating how different the place of the US will be in the world of the 80's from what it was in the 70's--JBS and ST did not have to be as perceptive as will you because we had that war which jolted this country into a new awareness of its role in the world. If you are to perceive our role for the 80's and 90's well
  - you must care about the world around you and pay attention to it. This applies whether you enter the military or other government service or not.
  - You must understand how our national interests, as well as those of our friends and potential enemies relate--where they harmonize and where they conflict, and, understanding that,

- you must help to define our nation's role in that world.
- That is not an easy challenge.
  - the pressures on you for conformity in outlook are much greater than perhaps ever in this century;
  - don't forget that George Orwell's decade is here. The class that replaces you here at The Citadel next fall will be the Class of 1984.
- Even now Orwell's Doublespeak is with us in some measure. Today you, as individuals, must stand up to the omnipresent, supremely superficial, instant analyses of our television networks and written media. Only you can determine
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- I challenge you to reason soundly and deeply about the world of the 1980's. Our nation's role in it will continue to be critical to all free men--we can retain the mantle of world leadership or lose it-- and the reins of US leadership will be in your hands much sooner than you think.

- I congratulate you on your achievement of this great step in your careers. I also challenge you, as your careers move onward, to ensure that whether as a public servant or as a private individual you each seek to repay the privilege of an education like this by contributing to the awareness of our nation of its changing role and responsibilities in the complex world we will face in the decades of your leadership.

